

Michaud's Secures \$2 Million for Top Priority Maine Institute for Human Genetics and Health Request

Monday, December 19 2005

WASHINGTON,

D.C. – Representative Michael H.

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The FY 2006 Defense conference report passed the House at 5:04 a.m. this morning by a vote of 308-106 with 2 Members voting present. Rep. Michaud joined a bipartisan group to oppose the bill due to several harmful provisions. The bill would open up drilling up in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for the long-term.

"As a member of the Renewable Energy Caucus, I do not believe drilling in this region of pristine natural beauty will provide lasting answers to the energy challenges facing this country or our dependency on foreign oil," Michaud stated. "I strongly support finding alternative sources of energy so that we are no longer dependent upon dwindling, environmentally harmful fossil fuels."

In addition, the bill enacts an across-the-board cut to all discretionary programs, including low income energy assistance (LIHEAP program), education, labor, and health. In addition, it gives protection for drug companies from liability in regards to flu vaccines.

"I simply couldn't vote for a bill that threatens our environment and enacts a one-percent across-the-board cut, or \$8 billion, for programs that help our most hard-pressed," Michaud said. "This abuse of process is being done to please oil companies and drug companies and at the expense of average Americans through cuts in defense spending, homeland security, FBI, education, and health care."

“While I regret not being able to support the bill, I am absolutely thrilled that the committee granted \$2 million for my top priority project, the Maine Institute for Genetics and Health,” Michaud said. “This funding is groundbreaking for Maine and our healthcare system.”

The Institute’s three partnership institutions — Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems (EMHS), The Jackson Laboratory, and the University of Maine Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences — intend to attract nationally ranked scientists, research grants, students and faculty. This Institute is considered a natural progression of the pioneering work created by these three entities to help lower health care costs.

“This Institute will make Maine a leader in medical research and put us on the cutting-edge of technology,” Michaud said. “This kind of investment is a big and bold step for Maine, helping to confront the challenges of the future, creating jobs and economic opportunity in our area.”

With this funding, EMHS will leverage its 30-year history in human genetics research by expanding its effort to include five genetics research scientists in the MIHGH. These scientists will have opportunities to integrate with the basic genetics research team at The Jackson Laboratory, as well as serve as adjunct faculty at the University’s Graduate School.

The Institute will aim to produce new medical breakthroughs that can move from the laboratory to human populations, especially aging and chronically ill populations in rural Maine. This research could improve the health status and health care costs in rural Maine. The region will also benefit from new commercial firms that will want to work in close proximity to the innovative research in the MIHGH.

“Whenever I could, I pushed for the inclusion of this project in the final bill,” Michaud said. “I’m thrilled that the Defense Appropriations Committee recognizes the individual strengths of these major institutions. Their combined effort will provide a foundation for economic success in the Bangor region and northern Maine as a whole.”

To date, EMHS alone has contributed \$17,928,545 towards the development of its research capabilities. It will contribute an

additional \$1,274,910 in 2005 towards the development of the MIHGH.

Congressman Michaud also announced his other top priority projects were also included in the final bill: The Army Center of Excellence, located at the University of Maine, received \$3 million in funding for projects for research and development on advanced structures and composites to be used for protective structures. Hodgdon Yachts received \$4.3 million for the development of the Mark V Patrol Boat Replacement Craft Prototype for the Navy. The New England Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative received \$1 million to help match regional manufacturers with national defense needs. In addition, Maine will receive \$1million for the development of Low Cost Avionics which will begin to validate the feasibility of low cost avionics equipment for the Department of Defense.

Next, the Defense Appropriations conference report will be considered by the Senate, before going to the President for signature.

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